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October 27, 2004

Google Unfolds 3D Mapping Acquisition

By [Colin C. Haley](#) and [Susan Kuchinskas](#)

UPDATED: Augmenting its technology assets and pushing into subscription services, Google ([Quote](#), [Chart](#)) announced today that it has acquired digital mapping specialist Keyhole for an undisclosed sum.

Keyhole's product combines a multi-terabyte database of mapping data and images collected from satellites and planes with easy-to-use software. It's aimed at consumers as well as businesses and public agencies.

Users enter an address and Keyhole's software accesses the database and presents a digital image of that location on their screen. The program then gives users many options, including the ability to zoom in from space-level to street-level, tilt and rotate the view or search for hotels, parks, ATMs or subways.

Unlike traditional mapping technologies, Keyhole creates a dynamic 3D interface for geographic information.

"The mission of Keyhole has been to organize information about the earth. We're committed to making the product better, backed by the

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resources of Google," said John Hanke, former CEO of Keyhole. Hanke will become general manager of Google's Keyhole group; Noah Doyle, former director of strategic marketing, will become market development manager for the group.

Hanke said Keyhole has its own search technology that lets users search for an address or business. Keyhole's software accesses the database and presents a digital image of that location on their screen. The program then gives users many options, including the ability to zoom in from space-level to street-level, tilt and rotate the view or search for hotels, parks, ATMs or subways.

"You can type in an address and 'fly' to it," he said. Users can also search for a specific restaurant or hotel. These are not paid placements, according to Hanke, but listings generated through a variety of databases.

"It's very simplistic search relative to the kinds of things Google does," he said.

While Hanke couldn't comment on whether Google search could be applied to Keyhole's databases, "Something like that is possible," he said.

Theoretically, users could employ Google.com's local search to find a local business and receive not only the address but a 3D representation of its location. "Generally, that's the idea," Hanke said.

Keyhole's technology could presumably be combined with Google local search and Google's Adwords keyword advertising service to enable marketers to bid to appear when Keyhole users searched a location or for a competitive business.

Hanke said he could not share future plans about advertising.

Google also announced a price cut for Keyhole 2 LT, from \$69.95 to \$29.95. It's also offering a free seven-day trial. A business subscription version is sold at \$599 per year. The company's 10,000 customers will not experience any disruption in service, Google said.

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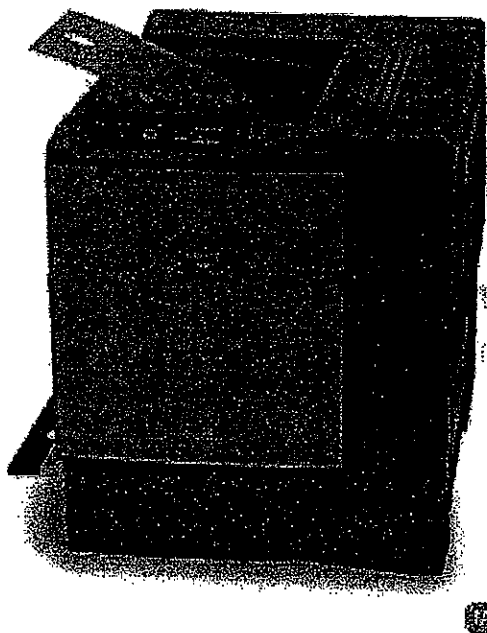
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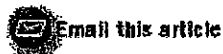
Keyhole was founded in 2001. It's privately held and received its initial backing from Sony Broadband. Later it received funding from In-Q-Tel, an investment arm of the Central Intelligence Agency.

The firm's technology has been used by the National Imagery and Mapping Agency as well as CNN, which uses it to augment its reporting of the war in Iraq. The product is also used in the real estate and insurance industries as well as intelligence services.

During its recent investor conference call, Larry Page, Google's president of products, spoke of the company's goal of indexing the word's information, and hinted that it would continue to move beyond traditional search applications, as it did with its recent expansion of Google Print, which indexes content from books, its cell phone-based SMS search, and its desktop search product.

"Our technologies will significantly expand the definition of search and the scope of our business," Page said on the call.

Material from Jupitermedia's ClickZ contributed to this report.



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